

~~1829. Oct 11~~
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P L A N

For the better regulating the COAL TRADE to LONDON, by preventing the Fluctuation of the Price, and by that means reduce it to a Standard at Billingsgate Market: By which Method the Inhabitants will, at all Times, be supplied at a constant moderate Rate, in Time of Peace and War, for the future.

I. **I**T is necessary to observe, the original cause for inhancing the price of coals is owing to impressing seamen from Admiralty protections, upon all emergencies, and immediately causes a general stagnation throughout the whole trade, which is entirely put to a stand; consequently a scarcity, and an advance in the price, must ensue at market.

II. Pressing occasions seamens wages and freight of coals to advance double and treble, which was verified on the breaking out of last war, when wages advanced from thirty shillings to three, four, five, six, and seven pounds per voyage, and that extra premium was mostly gained by foreigners, for navigating shipping in the coal trade; on which account a large sum of money was carried abroad, and for ever lost to the nation, our own seamen being

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either pressed, or not daring to appear. The freight was advanced from about five shillings per chaldron, paid in time of peace, to ten, fifteen, and often upwards of twenty shillings per chaldron; by which means the prices have been enhanced from twenty-five shillings to forty, and sometimes upwards of fifty shillings in the pool pending the war, which is double the standard price proposed by this plan. But, at the lowest estimation, supposing the advanced price only six or seven shillings per chaldron, or four or five and thirty in the pool, upon the annual consumption the extra charge to the consumers evidently amounted to two hundred thousand pounds annually, as no advance is made at Newcastle, or the other sea ports, in the price of coals, nor duties nor other charges at loading or delivering, more in time of war than in time of peace.

III. The following instance will shew what a heavy burthen the coal trade to London was loaded with last war; which would not have been the case, had they had a few seamen inviolably protected, to navigate their ships. For instance, a ship of three hundred tons burthen, in time of peace paid about twenty pounds for wages, and during the war ships of equal burthen were at the expence of sixty or seventy pounds, which was an additional expence of fifty pounds upon a cargo of three hundred chaldron of coals, allowing the whole quantity consumed in the port of London six hundred thousand chaldron. It is evident the extra expence, paid for seamens wages only, for navigating about seventy thousand tons of shipping annually in this trade, cost the consumers seventy thousand pounds.

IV. The masters and owners of ships, loaded with such heavy expences, and loss of time, found their only means of recourse was to enhance the price at market; neither could they otherwise be relieved; for, instead of making ten or twelve voyages a year, they seldom made more than six, or exceeded seven; by which means, not only the poor inhabitants in the port of London, but all over England, felt, and must always feel, such embarrassments befalling the coal trade; and, for want of a sufficient quantity coming to market, both the subjects and revenue suffer, by the deficiency of the customary duty not being paid.

V. The

V. The high price of coals not only continued from the beginning to the ending of the war, but has been several years after, as upon the late affair which happened concerning Faulklands Islands with the Spaniards. On this occasion, according to custom, impressing from protections was revived; on which account seamens wages, freight, and price was advanced at market; as before, and at all times, when any thing of this kind of rupture is agitated, a handle is made by dealers, and the price of this most necessary article of life always kept in a perpetual fluctuating state, which must ever be the case, if not prevented by the legislative power; more especially as this trade is carried on and supported by a powerful body of men, connected at Billingsgate, who even will take the advantage in time of scarcity, to monopolise and enhance the price to such a degree, added to other heavy charges this trade is loaded with in time of war, that the consumers have evidently been saddled with some extra millions in a few years, for that essential article of life.

VI. The practicability of redressing these grievances must be by obtaining parliamentary protections, in like manner as in the Greenland trade, for twelve hundred seamen, which is about one third of the number of men inviolably protected in that fishery, and will be sufficient to navigate the shipping employed in this colliery; otherwise, protecting that fishery on the present mode must be deemed a very partial one, if all other branches of our navigation are to be excluded, as it is conceived the coal trade is of much greater utility and consequence, as a national concern: It is therefore humbly submitted, whether it is not, for many reasons too obvious to mention, deserving, and ought to receive the legislative protection for their navigation also.

VII. As soon as the aforesaid protections can be obtained, no pretensions for enhancing the price of coals can exist, as hitherto; its utility will immediately be evinced, the shipping passing and repassing, the same in war as in peace, and by the reduction of seamens wages and freights of coals, from the exorbitant hire aforesaid to a moderate rate, with which seamen will be much better satisfied, being relieved from the terror and hardship they undergo, by being impressed from their families, for which no wages can retaliate, neither will there be any occasion to hire foreigners, as beforementioned, at a heavy loss to the nation.

VIII. The

VIII. The number of seamen required to navigate the coal trade appears as follows, viz. A ship of three hundred tons burthen, constantly employed and kept running without interruption, can with ease make ten voyages a year, as I have made thirteen voyages in three quarters of a year, viz. from Candlemas to Martinmas, with a ship of the same burthen; which makes it evident that one ship of three hundred tons can easily bring to market three thousand chaldron of coals annually, and two hundred sail of equal burthen, so employed, must evidently supply upwards of six hundred thousand chaldron, a sufficient quantity for the consumption; for which purpose twelve hundred foremast men, protected, and divided amongst the aforesaid quantity of tonnage, by allowing six men to each ship of three hundred tons, or to others in proportion to their burthen, being more or less, will effect what is proposed.

IX. That, for the better preservation of the nursery of seamen, it is proposed, that the number of men protected shall be limited to two able men to every hundred tons burthen, exclusive of a mate and carpenter, which will lay the master and owners under a necessity of indenturing more servants than ever before; and if granted in favour of married men, who have families, by being at home every voyage to see their younger sons brought up, who, when at age, are generally put out apprentices to sea; by which means the nursery of seamen, so valuable to this nation, will ever be preserved, and perpetually encreased, instead of being dispersed and turned adrift, as in the last war, which was too evident by the boys taken under the protection of the Marine Society and Justice Fielding, who were generally the deserted offspring of soldiers and sailors, pressed and compelled into his Majesty's service, and perhaps never more heard of; and in course the family dispersed and lost to the community.

The most essential point to be settled by this regulation, is the freight of coals from Newcastle, &c. to London, on which depends the whole that is wanted to fix the standard price at Billingsgate market, to the mutual satisfaction of the masters and owners of colliers, and the consumers in the port of London. And first it must be considered, how to prevent any cause of complaint from the owners of shipping, and to secure a proper supply of coals annually at market for the consumption, by continuing the colliers in the trade; Therefore, the
price

price should be fixed so as to be adequate, and upon a footing with the annual freight, settled and paid by merchants and traders throughout the kingdom, in all other branches of our navigation; otherwise the colliers will, in course, be driven out of this trade to seek better employment, which is the case at present, owing to the time of profound peace, and the openness of the late winters; without any alarms of press gangs to raise the price of coals in the pool; and so far I dare venture to say, masters and owners of ships are now, and have been for some time past, selling coals at market greatly under prime cost; *and that the tonnage employed are losing at this present time at the rate of 50,000*l.* a year, a balance they ought at all times to gain, to refit the shipping, with the ware and tare of their annual voyages; which is an evident proof of the fluctuating state this trade is always in, in peace and war, and shews the indispensable necessity of keeping up a standard price at Billingsgate market; otherwise the port of London can never be properly supplied with coals.* For instance, coals are now sold in the pool for 25 shillings per chaldron, and if any rupture comes in agitation, in a very short time the price will be enhanced cent per cent, upwards of 50 shillings per chaldron, double the standard price herein proposed, by this regulation being made, so much wanted, and more effectually, as the coal trade is undoubtedly the greatest branch of mercantile navigation belonging to this nation, or any other in the known world, for tonnage of shipping, and craft to carry it on, the number of men employed, and as a nursery for seamen; besides all its immense dependencies throughout the kingdom; yet the worse conducted and carried on, for fifty years past, of any other branch of navigation belonging to this nation, and certainly requires the serious consideration and attention of the Ministry and Parliament, for its future support, protection, and regulation; so long wanted for the benefit of the community in general.

Lastly, that protecting seamen to navigate the colliers may not be of any hindrance to manning the navy, it is humbly proposed, that the port of London shall, in consideration of such protection granted by government, upon the first notice given, immediately raise and furnish the same number of able
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seamen, man for man, to serve as volunteers on board the Royal Navy; and the money required for that purpose of paying the bounties, to be by a requisition of the consumers paying of one penny per chaldron, which will be full sufficient for obtaining that number of seamen; an acquisition much to the advantage of government, by raising them without expence, and upon the same equitable principle relieves the inhabitants of all degrees, within this great metropolis, from a heavy burthen they have long laboured under; owners of ships, instead of relying on the uncertainty of a market, as at present, will always receive a regular settled freight, as in other trades of navigation, according to the custom of merchants.

It is necessary to observe, the present time is the most eligible for carrying this plan into execution, more especially as the price of coals is now reduced to a much lower ebb than it has been for many years past; but after the price is once enhanced at market, as beforementioned, it is not practicable to reduce it on a sudden, which has been too often fatally experienced of late years, in and about this metropolis, and more especially amongst the labouring poor.

That, in order to supply the indigent poor, within the bills of mortality, by the peck and bushel, and to prevent the distress they are commonly driven to in the severity of hard winters, it is proposed, that every parish shall erect a warehouse, and lay in one thousand chaldron each, or two stores of five hundred chaldron, or what quantity shall be thought proper; deposited as magazines to supply the different coal sheds, to measure out the coals to the poor consumers; and that each coal shed shall be licensed, and obliged to retail at a certain price, winter and summer, according to the standard regulated at Billingsgate market; to be settled weekly by the Lord-Mayor the same as Bread; which, according to this plan, cannot exceed eleven pence per bushel, full measure; and, considering how they are served with short measure, and advance in the price, will at least be a saving, in time of peace, of two-pence per bushel; which, according to the annual consumption, allowing one bushel per week, or one chaldron and a half to every two persons per annum, by estimation, the quantity consumed, by peck and bushel, may be 150,000 chaldron, at two-pence per bushel, which will save the poor, in that case, forty or fifty thousand pounds a year less than they have paid for twenty years past.

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An Investigation of the Coal Trade from Newcastle to London, &c.

Newcastle Charges.	Prime cost paid fitters from 13s. to 15s. per chaldron, the average 14s. making per keel	s.	—	112	—
	Keel dues		—	20	—
	Duke of Richmond's Duty 1s. per chaldron,		—	8	—
	Custom-house and Trinity fees		—	5	—

N. B. One keel produces about 15 chaldron London measure 15)145) 0 9 8

London Charges.	King's and Orphans duty per chaldron	£.	s.	d.	
	Meetage	0	8	6	
	Custom-house and Trinity fees, &c.	0	0	8	
	Charge of delivery per chaldron	0	1	6	
	London charge		0	11	4
	In time of peace, Freight per regulation		0	7	0
	Total charge in the pool		1	8	0

Sunderland charges.	Prime cost paid fitters, from 12s. to 14s. per chaldron, the average 13s. per keel		—	104	—
	Keel dues		—	21	—
	Custom-house and Trinity, &c.		—	5	—
	London charges as above		15)130(	0	8 8
	Settled freight			0	11 4
	Total charge			0	7 0
				1	7 0

Hartley and Blyth charges.	Prime cost paid the coal owners 12s. per chaldron,		—	96	—
	Custom-house and Trinity dues		—	5	—
	London charges as above		15)100(	0	6 8
	Settled freight			0	11 4
	Total charge			0	7 0
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An investigation of the Coal Trade from New-
castle to London, &c.

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